

2035  
*The two Witnesses prophesying a Thousand two  
Hundred and Threescore Days in Sackloth.*

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A  
S E R M O N,

Preached at the Opening of the  
*ASSOCIATE SYNOD,*

AT EDINBURGH, APRIL 27th, 1779.

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BY MICHAEL ARTHUR,  
*Minister of the GOSPEL at PEEBLES.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE AUTHOR of the following sermon is conscious of his unfitness for appearances of this nature, and of the many imperfections that attend this, and all his other Pulpit-performances. The subject, however, is deeply interesting ; especially at the present critical juncture.

THE DISCOURSE is intended to excite an unthinking and indifferent generation to make an open and explicit appearance for the truth ;——to encourage and animate the friends of truth in the way and work of the Lord ; especially under the disadvantages and discouragements incident to them in these degenerate times ;——to inform the ignorant and misinformed concerning the continued Succession of witnesses in the ages prior to the Protestant reformation ; to guard the witnesses of every Denomination against the corruptions and abominations of Antichrist ; as also to confirm them in the belief and expectation

pectation of his final ruin in due time;—  
and to rectify certain mistakes many labour  
under in relation to the nature and design of  
the testimony, in which the Author and o-  
thers, with whom he is connected,—are  
engaged; and in relation to the terms of  
Communion among them. These are some  
of the purposes for which the Sermon was  
composed, and is now published. How far  
it is calculated for answering all or any of  
these ends, the public must determine.



## REVEL. xi. 3.

—*I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

**T**HIS mysterious book contains a series of prophecy that has occasioned much enquiry in the several ages of the New Testament Church. It is, with evident propriety, placed in the end of the sacred Canon. In it we find a prophetic account of the Christian Church to the end of the world. It foretels especially three great events;—the gradual rise, the long reign, and the final downfall of that Antichristian power, which, elsewhere in scripture, is called the Man of Sin and the Son of Perdition. Accordingly there are in it three principal prophecies,—that of the seven seals, that of the seven trumpets, and that of the seven vials. These prophecies, though not contemporary, are necessarily connected together. The seventh seal introduces the trumpets, and the seventh trumpet introduces the vials. The connexion in which the prophecy, to which the text belongs, is introduced, points out the period to which it refers.

In the first two verses of this chapter, the Apostle John informs us, *That there was given to him a reed like unto a rod: and an angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given*  
unto

*unto the Gentiles : and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.* It is thought, that there is here an allusion to Ezek. xl. 3. where the prophet is introduced speaking thus, *Behold there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring-reed ; and he stood in the gate.* Of this vision we have a farther account in the subsequent verses. We are told, the Prophet saw, in vision, a man ascertaining the dimensions, and exhibiting the model of a new temple ; in order to encourage the Jews to expect the restoration of the temple and the temple-service, notwithstanding that the former was to ly in ruins, and the latter to be discontinued for many years. The temple, including the worship of it, was a figure of the New Testament Church, and the spiritual worship instituted and performed in it to the end of the world. Accordingly the one is often, in scripture, described by similitudes taken from the other. This accounts for the expressions used in the verses preceding the text.

The reed or rod, with which the Apostle is directed to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshippers at it, may denote the sacred Scripture, that unerring Standard, by which all persons, principles and practices are to be tried : And as they agree or disagree with it, they are to be received or rejected. That part of the representation, in ver. 1. relating to the temple, the altar and the worshippers at it, may denote the remnant preserved from gross corruption during the prevalence of the Antichristian or Popish apostasy. There was still to be a Temple or a Church, and an altar, or worship performed in some measure of conformity to the unerring Rule. The other part of the representation, in ver. 2. relating to the court without the Temple, which was not to be measured, but given to the Gentiles, may refer to formal and corrupt Christians, who were foreseen to be far more numerous than the true worshippers, during the continuance of the apostasy. In this part of the vision, there is a manifest allusion

allusion to the different courts which belonged to the temple at Jerusalem. There was particularly the outer court, in which the Congregation assembled and worshipped; and there was the inner court, or what is otherwise called the court of the priests, in which the altar stood. As the inner court is supposed to have borne but a small proportion to the outer court, and as the former is referred to in ver. 1. and the latter in ver. 2. there is here a plain intimation, that the number of true worshippers was to be but small, very small, in comparison of the number of formal and corrupt Christians, during the period to which this prophecy relates. The outer court was to be occupied by persons, in their religious usages and practices, like Gentiles or Pagans, than Christians. This was to be the case for no less than forty-two prophetic months, or twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days. This passage, like the preternatural pillar that attended the Israelitish camp in the wilderness, has both a light and a dark side. It wears both an alarming and an encouraging aspect. It is truly affecting to think that the holy City should be trodden under foot for so long a time. But it is very agreeable to think, that a remnant was all along to subsist in one part or other, to appear for God and his interest in the world. This has been the case, when the church has been in the lowest condition, both under the Old and New Testament. When the Prophet once apprehended, that he was the only person that had escaped the gross idolatry which then prevailed, God apprized him, that he had reserved to himself, though unknown to the Prophet, no less *than seven thousand persons, who had not been permitted to bow the knee to Baal*, Rom. xi, 2, 3, 4. In like manner, when the New Testament Church was at her lowest;—when Antichrist was at his height,—and his kingdom in its greatest extent and power, the Lord had his witnesses, who were enabled to persist in a steady appearance for truth, and opposition to error, notwithstanding all the disadvantages and hardships they



they laboured under, and all the methods that were used for their destruction and ruin. Herein the prophecy, in the text, has been, and is accomplished.----*I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackloth.*

In handling this interesting subject, I shall endeavour, *First*, To explain, and, *Secondly*, Apply it. In the explication I shall follow the most natural order of the words. Accordingly I am,

- I. To give some account of God's *two witnesses*.
- II. Consider what is here insured to them, *I will give power to my two witnesses, saith God, and they shall prophesy.*
- III. The season of their prophesying, *A thousand two hundred and threescore days.*
- IV. The manner of it pointed out by their habit, *clothed in sackloth.* It is proposed,

I. To give some account of God's *two witnesses*. Concerning these two Witnesses, Expositors are far from being agreed. They have been understood of Moses and Elias, who, it is imagined, are to appear and suffer for the Christian cause, under the reign of Antichrist. By the two Witnesses, some have understood the Old and New Testaments: Others, a faithful Ministry in the Church and Magistracy in the State, uniting their endeavours for promoting reformation. They have been interpreted and understood of the famous Waldenses and Albigenes. But by the two Witnesses we do not understand any two particular persons, but a continued succession of persons raised up by God, and enabled to appear for truth in opposition to error, during the continuance of the Antichristian or Popish apostasy. If it is queried, why they are said to be two, and only two; different reasons



sons may be assigned for it. It has been thought that the witnesses for God are said to be *two*, to distinguish them from the false Prophet, who is said to be *one*, chap. xix. 20. and from the unclean spirits, which proceed out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, which are said to be *three*, chap. xvi. 13. It has also been thought, that though the two witnesses are not to be understood of any two particular persons, they may allude to some examples of famous pairs, God has raised up in different ages of the Church, both under the Old and New Testament. Various instances have been mentioned,—as Abraham and Lot, Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, Ezra and Nehemiah, Joshua and Zerubbabel, Haggai and Zechariah, under the Old Testament. And, when the period arrived at which the Christian dispensation was to be introduced, the disciples were sent forth two and two. Accordingly we find them sometimes travelling in the exercise of their office, in pairs, or two and two,—as Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas. In later ages of the New Testament Church the witnesses have also been raised up in pairs, or two and two,—as the Waldenses and Albigenses, Jerome and Huss, Luther and Calvin.—The number of the witnesses evidently alludes to what the law required. In order to ascertain a thing, it required at least two concurring witnesses, Deut. xvii. 6. *At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death, be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.* This law is repeated, chap. xix. 15. Our Lord refers to it, Matth. xviii. 15, 16, *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee two or three more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.* The apostle also refers to it Heb. x. 28, *He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.* From what

has been suggested already, it is easy to perceive who are here intended by God's two witnesses.— They evidently are to be understood of a small, but sufficient number of persons, subsisting in one part or other of the world, and enabled to avow the truth and oppose error, during the continuance of Popish superstition and idolatry, especially a Gospel-ministry among them. God has always had his witnesses in the world, both under the Old and New Testament. He had them prior to the rise of the great Antichrist; and he will have them posterior to his downfall. But the text immediately means, the witnesses raised up, time after time, during the forty-two prophetic months, or the twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days of his reign. If time permitted, we might consider them as *witnesses*,—as *two witnesses*,—and as *God's two witnesses*.

*First, As witnesses.* Jesus Christ is the faithful and true witness. So he styles himself in the inscription of the Epistle to the Laodicean Church, Rev. iii, 14. He died a Witness, Confessor or Martyr for the truth. In the good confession he witnessed before Pontius Pilate he speaks thus, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*, John xviii. 37. Often are witnesses called in Courts of Judicature among men. They may be called to give evidence either for or against a person or thing, in order that the innocent may be acquitted and the guilty convicted. Often is the great God, particularly in respect of his cause and interest, his truths and institutions, arraigned and condemned in the world. This has been the case especially during the prevalence of the grand apostacy. It is necessary, therefore, that there be, in every age, some to appear for him and his interest in the world. Their work, as witnesses, in the general, is to avow the truth, and appear in opposition to error. Every witness for God may and ought to say, what the great witness said, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I*  
*should*

*should bear witness unto the truth.* The witnesses for God are to avouch the truth and all the truth,—the truth relating to the Doctrine, the Worship, the Government and the Discipline of the Church. For this end they are to insist for the accomplishment of the promise, in the coming of the Spirit of truth, to guide them into truth, and all truth, John xiv. 13. They are, in an especial manner, to appear for the truth that is most controverted and opposed in the age and place wherein they live. On this account, it may be called *the present Truth*, 2 Pet. i. 12. They must be consistent and uniform in their appearances for the truth. Every sacred truth is of great worth. The modern distinction between essential and circumstantial truths, or articles of Religion, is without foundation in scripture, and of a dangerous tendency. When any sacred truth comes under consideration, the question is not, Is it an essential or a circumstantial truth, or article? Or, in other words, Is it, or is it not absolutely necessary to salvation? But the proper question is,—Is it a Scripture-truth? If it is a Scripture truth, though of small account with others, we are to receive and maintain it. If we once admit the distinction between essential and circumstantial truths, or between things that are, and things that are not necessary to salvation, on how precarious and uncertain a footing will we be? Who will presume or pretend to determine what things are, and what things are not absolutely necessary to salvation?

As witnesses are called to give evidence either for or against a thing, the witnesses for God are not only to assert the truth, but oppose error. Truth and error are ever opposite the one to the other. Long has the contest lasted between truth and error. Manifold and grievous are the errors that were foreseen to prevail during the period of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth. There has been, accordingly, a mournful increase of errors and abominations of all kinds. And, therefore, it was necessary that there should be a continued succe-



sion of witnesses to appear in opposition to these errors and corruptions in principle and practice. Error in principle, as well as immorality in practice, is pernicious and dangerous. For tolerating the former as well as for tolerating the latter, the Angel of the Church in Pergamos was blamed, Rev. ii. 6, 14, 15. Different errors have been broached and propagated in different periods of the Church,—and, in every age, witnesses have appeared against these errors and abominations. Thus the Testimony has been supported. Herein the text has been accomplished. God has ever had his witnesses,—a greater or a smaller number of them. But this reminds me of

The *second* thing on this part of the subject,—the number of the witnesses; they are said to be two, and only two. This denotes two things,

1. A small number. When Antichrist was at his height, and his kingdom in its most powerful and flourishing state, the witnesses must have been few, very few. And, notwithstanding that so long a time has elapsed since the Protestant Reformation, the number of the witnesses, comparatively speaking, still is small. How small a proportion does that part of the world called Christian bear to the whole of it? And of these called Christians how few can, with any propriety, be called witnesses for truth? A great part of the world called Christian is Popish; and even in the Protestant world much corruption still prevails. How few are the witnesses in comparison of what we have reason to think they will be in the ages to come? What a glorious accession will the Church receive by the general conversion of the Jewish nation to the Christian faith? As the Jews are now dispersed over the face of the earth, there is reason to think that their inbringing will be accompanied with an universal spread of the gospel among the Gentile nations, and, therefore, with a general conversion of these nations to Christ. Long has the happy event been delayed. May the all-wise Disposer of



of events hasten it in his time. The witnesses are but few at present. *Is not the daughter of Zion left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged City?* But let us be thankful for the remnant that is left, *For except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah,* Isa. i. 8, 9.

2. It denotes a sufficient number. The number, though small, is sufficient in order to the validity of the Testimony, *For in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established.* Notwithstanding the almost universal degeneracy that has prevailed since the first rise of the Roman Antichrist, or the commencement of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, many have been raised up to support and transmit, from one generation to another, a Testimony for truth. Hitherto the banner has been displayed. It was so in the very darkest ages of Antichristian superstition and idolatry. It might be shown that all along there has been a succession of witnesses to testify against the corruptions of the Romish Church. Even in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, these darkest ages, there were not wanting witnesses to oppose the corruptions of the Papal Church. A leading point of Testimony at first related to the use of images in the worship of God. Now, we are told, as early as the ninth century, particular opposition was made to this anti-scriptural practice. In the tenth century, the absurd Doctrine of Transubstantiation made its appearance, and met with such opposition in England, as well as other parts, that the Archbishop of Canterbury was obliged to have recourse to miracles for confirmation of it. That and other corruptions were not less opposed in the eleventh century, particularly by the famous Berenger and his numerous disciples. In the twelfth century an explicit Testimony is said to have been given against the corruptions of the Church

Church of Rome, particularly her spurious sacraments and anti-scriptural hierarchy. It was about this time that the famous Waldenses and Albigenses first arose. We are told that in the thirteenth century these witnesses for God increased much both in number and strength. In the fourteenth century, we are informed, the doctrine of these witnesses for God, in opposition to the corrupt doctrine of the Roman Church, penetrated into almost every Christian country. This was a happy prelude of the approaching reformation. This is the period at which John Wickliff, a man of great consideration in the university of Oxford, appeared, and witnessed for the truth. In the fifteenth century, the celebrated Huss and Jerome were raised up in Bohemia. They espoused and supported the Testimony till they were put to death, in virtue of the impious decrees of the Council of Constance. It was on occasion of their death, that many of the Nobles of Bohemia and Moravia entered into a League to reject the decrees of that wicked Council. These were called the Bohemian brethren. They are said to have opposed Transubstantiation, the Pope's authority, and most of the corruptions of the Church of Rome. The next age, or sixteenth century, brings us to the time of the Protestant Reformation, in which Luther and Calvin were eminently instrumental.—Thus there has been all along a continued succession, and a sufficient number of witnesses, to support the Testimony, and transmit it from one generation to another. It was so even prior to the Protestant Reformation, it has been so ever since, and it will be so to the end.

As to those witnesses that lived in the ages prior to the Protestant Reformation, it must be granted, that, comparatively speaking, they were few, very few. They were hid in corners, and they laboured under peculiar disadvantages and restraints. Neither is it to be thought that they could have equal insight into the corruptions of the apostate Church with those who have

have lived in later and more enlightened ages. Yet they seem to have been more considerable in number than some may imagine. Many thousands of them were cut off, by the powerful armies that were raised against them, and by the inquisition. And as to their religious principles, it is observed by a judicious Historian of the P. pish Church, that they held very near the same opinions with those whom we now call Calvinists. I shall now leave this, and proceed to

The *third* and *last* thing on this part of the subject, namely, to consider them as God's two witnesses. He is the rightful Proprietor and Governor of the world, and, therefore, all persons and things are his, and at his disposal. But he claims a special interest or propriety in his witnesses. He speaks of them with an evident air of approbation and complacence. He makes great account of them, and of their services and sufferings in the world. They are generally of small consideration with others,—even treated with great contempt by the world. But, in his estimation, they are excellent. He accounts them his jewels. His consolatory promise is, - *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my Jewels*, Mal. iii. 17. In whatever corner of the earth or condition of life they be, they are the objects of his peculiar choice, care and complacence. Every thing pertaining to them, is valuable in his account. *Their blood is precious in his sight*; particularly, when it is shed in support and defence of his cause and interest on earth. The earth may open her mouth to receive it; but it is not forgotten or lost. In his own time and way he will make inquisition for it. *Then shall the earth disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain*, Isa. xxvii. 21. Then in the idolatrous city will be found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that are slain upon the earth, Revela. xviii. 24. The witnesses are his in point of use. It is his work in which they are employed. It is work that he assigns to them, in which he assists them, and by which



which they eminently glorify him. In one word, they are his, and will be acknowledged to be his another day. Now they appear for him and his interest on earth; ---and the period is fast approaching, at which he will acknowledge them in a far more public manner than they now do or can appear for him. He will acknowledge them before an assembled world.—Such a great and august assembly never met and never will meet again. To their unspeakable and everlasting consolation and joy the promise will be accomplished, *Them that honour me I will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30.—I proceed now to the

II. thing in the general division of the text,---to consider what is here insured to God's two witnesses—*I will give power to my two witnesses*, saith God, *and they shall prophesy*. Every observing reader must perceive, that the word *power*, in our version of the text, is a supplement. In the Greek text it reads thus, *I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy*. This ellipsis or defect in the Text has been differently supplied; some have thought that the holy city, mentioned in the close of the foregoing verse, is to be understood here. According to this reading the text runs thus,---*I will give it*, i. e. the holy City, that they may ministerially reform and defend it. According to others, the supplement rather is to be taken from our Lord's words, Luke xxi. 15. *I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist*.--- Thus supplied, the text contains a consolatory promise in relation to the appearances the witnesses may be called to make for truth. He, who calls to make these appearances, has engaged to assist them on such occasions; particularly to direct them what to speak, and how to speak for him and his interest,---even to express themselves with freedom and propriety in the presence of persons, in rank and condition, superior



perior to themselves. Others would read the text thus,---*I will give my Spirit to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy.* It is certain that without the special aid of the divine Spirit the witnesses for God can neither speak nor act aright on any occasion : And copious effusions of the holy Ghost, in his manifold and various influences and operations, may be expected in the latter days, *The Holy Ghost is, in this plentiful manner, now given, because Jesus is now glorified.* The word commission has been supplied in the text, and then it reads, *I will give commission to my witnesses, and they shall prophesy.* In one word, the text has been thus,—*I will give to my two witnesses that they may prophesy.*—According to this reading, the text does not so much express what he will give to his two witnesses, as the purpose for which he will give it, namely, that they may prophesy.

In the general, there evidently is insured to them here all that their several circumstances do or may require ; particularly all that is necessary to enable them to finish their Testimony. They are raised up by him one after another. They have all their furniture for witnessing and prophesying work from him. Whatever they or any of them, do or suffer for him in the world, in relation to it all, they may say, as the apostle of the Gentiles in relation to his diligence, fidelity and success in the ministerial work.—*Not I but the grace of God which was with me,* 1 Cor. xv. 10. He calls them to their work. The work is by far too arduous to be undertaken without his warrant. This is a distinguished honour that he confers on one and not another. To be employed and useful in the work of the Lord is truly honourable. The apostle Paul considers his call to the apostolic, or ministerial office in this light, 1 Tim. i. 12. *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.* He disposes and in every respect fits them for their work : In whatever period of the Church their lot is ordered, or whatever appearances for truth

they are called to make, they are warranted to plead for themselves the promises in the text,—*I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy.*—Conscious of the arduousness and difficulty that attends their work, are the witnesses ready to cry out with the apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Comfort is here administered to them. Are they called to encounter dangers and difficulties? And do they labour under disadvantages and discouragements of different kinds? The text insures support and through bearing to them to the end. They may be encouraged and animated from the consideration of his presence with them on all occasions, and in all possible circumstances of duty and dangers, work and warfare. What he said to his apostles, he says to his faithful ministers still, *Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world,* Matth. xxviii. 20.

The work in which the witnesses are employed, is here expressed by *prophesying*. This expression has been understood to intimate an eminent measure of the Spirit of God granted to these witnesses, to fit them for their work. A prophetic *Spirit*, properly so called, is not now to be expected. It is long since it ceased in the Church. There is now no occasion or need for it. We read indeed of Prophets in the New Testament Church, 1 Cor. xii. 28. But the Prophets there mentioned were of the extraordinary kind, and therefore ceased with the apostolic age. The word *prophecy* is, perhaps, in the New Testament Church applied to ordinary as well as extraordinary teachers. In 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 2, 3. it may perhaps denote an office or work rather of the ordinary than of the extraordinary kind. Though ministers of the Gospel are not authorised to add to the prophecies contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, a great part of their office and work is to explain and apply the prophecies contained in these scriptures. Besides, one minister of the gospel excels especially in one branch of the ministerial office or work,—another in another branch of it.

On one occasion Gospel ministers are called to insist especially on one subject, on another occasion on another subject. Some public teachers, of the ordinary kind, in the apostolic Churches, might be eminently qualified for explaining and applying the Old Testament prophecies to their times and circumstances ; and, accordingly, their work may be expressed by their prophesying. A great part of the work of the public teachers in the apostolic Churches consisted in applying the prophecies of the Old Testament to Jesus of Nazareth, in order to prove that he was the promised and expected Messiah. The propriety of the expression in the text, so far as it relates to Gospel ministers, is obvious.† One great thing to which they are called, during the time of their prophesying in sackcloth, is to explain and apply, for the consolation of the suffering remnant, the scripture prophecies relating to the downfall of Antichrist, and the glorious deliverance that is to be granted to the Church of God.

It is here presupposed that there are, in scripture, prophecies relating to the downfall, as well as the rise and reign of the Antichristian power. Both his rise and ruin were early foretold. There are passages in the book of Daniel which have been so interpreted and understood by the best Expositors. His rise and reign are foretold, chap. vii 8, 21, 24, 25. *I considered the horns, and behold there came up another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns pluckt up*

† What is said on this part of the subject, in relation to the witnesses and their work, may appear at first sight, inconsistent with the account given of them in the first Head. But when the author speaks of gospel ministers as witnesses, and the ministerial work, as intended by prophesying, he does not mean to exclude the other ministers of the Church from being witnesses. It certainly is incumbent on, and competent for them, in their station, to concur with the ministers of the Church, in bearing witness to the truth. In that by the witnesses he still understands a godly remnant in general ; though it is especially competent for, and incumbent on ministers of the gospel, in the time of the text, to prophesy.



by the roots : and, behold, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise : and another shall rise after them, and he shall be divers from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws : and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times, and the dividing of time. Chap. xi. 36, 37. And the king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished : for that that is determined, shall be done. Neither shall he regard the god of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god : for he shall magnify himself above all. There is a particular prophetic account of the great Antichrist in 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. — That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition : Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work : only he that now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish ; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. The prophecies, in this book of the Revelation, relating to the rise and reign of the grand apostate, are too numerous to be repeated on this occasion.

But as the rise and reign of the Antichristian power were foretold, his downfall was also predicted. Tho' his



his rise was to be far earlier than his ruin, the latter was foretold as soon as the former. The prophet Daniel foretold his rise and reign, and he also foretold his ruin. Chap. vii. 1, 26, 27. *I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame, And the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume, and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all kingdoms shall serve and obey him.* Chap. xi. 40, 44, 45. *And at the time of the end, shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind with chariots and with horsemen, and with many ships, and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. But tidings out of the east, and out of the north, shall trouble him; therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to take away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the holy glorious mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. His downfall is clearly foretold, 2. Thess. ii. 8 *The Lord shall consume him with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming.* The time, would fail me to repeat the many passages in the book of Revelation, in which that great and glorious event is predicted. They are obvious to every intelligent reader. Thus this prophetic book has a light as well as a dark side. It foretels a season of great distress to pass over the Christian church. But it no less foretells and insures deliverance to her, and a happy state to ensue,—even the happiest state of the Church on earth. It is here infallibly insured, that during this dismal period of the Church's distress, a Gospel-ministry were to be, from first to last, continued, to enforce and apply, for the consolation of the afflicted remnant, the prophecies relating to that great event,—the final  
downfall*

downfall of the grand adversary, and the great enlargement of the Church in the latter days. In this manner the suffering remnant has been preserved from sinking and succumbing under their trials hitherto,—and in this manner they will be supported and animated to the end. And herein the promise in our text has been and will be accomplished,—*I will give to my two witnesses, saith God, and they shall prophesy.*—This leads me to the

III. Thing proposed, To consider the season of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth,—a thousand two hundred and threelcore days. We understand the twelve hundred and sixty days, in the text, of the same period intended by *the forty two months of treading under foot the holy city*, in the verse preceding the text, as also expressed by the *time, times and half a time* of the woman's sojourning in the wilderness mentioned Chap. xii. 14. and *the forty two months of the power of the beast*, Chap. xiii. 5. According to some good expositors it is also meant by *the three days and a half*, mentioned in the ninth and eleventh verses of this chapter. By the three days and a half they understand three years and a half,—not proper but prophetic years. They resolve these three years and a half into forty and two months; and again these forty two months into twelve hundred and sixty days, i. e. prophetic days or years. But as to the three days and a half mentioned in this chapter, during which the dead bodies of the slain witnesses lie unburied in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, there is no small diversity of opinion. Against understanding these three days and a half of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, it has been objected, that ver. 7. supposes the witnesses to finish their testimony prior to their being killed, and consequently, prior to the three days and a half of their lying unburied in the street of the great city. Ver. 7. runs thus, *And when they shall*

*shall have finished their testimony, the beast, that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, shall make war, and shall overcome, and kill them.* In answer to this objection, taken from this verse, it has been observed, that the first part of the verse might and, perhaps, ought to be rendered thus, *While they are, or shall be performing their Testimony.*—And in support of this reading they observe, that the Greek word, rendered *when*, signifies *while* Matt. xxiv. 32. And the Greek word answering to *finished* is rendered *performed* Luk. ii. 39. Others think that the three days and a half, mentioned in the 9th and again the 11th verse of this chapter, do not mean the same period intended by the twelve hundred and sixty days mentioned in the text, but three prophetic days and a half, or three years and a half. According to them, the history of the witnesses, and their lying unburied three prophetic days or years and a half, relate to some uncommonly severe persecutions of three years and a half's continuance. Several instances have been mentioned here,—as that about the time of the Council of Constance, 1414. The persecution in Queen Mary's time in England, 1553. The massacre of the Protestants in France, 1572. The cruelties which the poor Christians in Piedmont suffered under the Duke of Savoy, 1685. All which persecutions are said to have lasted about three years and a half.

But the killing of the witnesses needs not be restricted to, though it may be understood especially of some particular severe persecution or persecutions raised, or to be raised toward the end of the twelve hundred and sixty days or years of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth. And the three days and a half, during which they ly unburied, ought, perhaps, to be understood as an allusion, rather than as denoting a precise space of time. The allusion may be to the time during which a dead body may be supposed to keep from corruption.

Whatever may be intended by the three days and a half, during which the dead bodies of the witnesses remain



main unburied,—by the twelve hundred and sixty days, mentioned in the text, we understand twelve hundred and sixty years. The same period is expressed by a *time, times, and half a time*, Chap. xii. 14. Agreeably to that antient prophecy, Dan. xii. 6, 7. *And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right-hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished, to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be fulfilled.* By a time we understand a year, by times two years, and by half a time, half a year. Thus time, times, and half a time, by a great author, denotes three years and a half. Each year consists of twelve months, and each month of thirty days. Thus three years and a half are equal to forty-two months, and forty-two months make twelve hundred and sixty days, *i. e.* prophetic days or years. It has been observed, that the Solar year of the Eastern nations consisted of twelve months, and every month of thirty days; and that this year seems to be used by the apostle John in the Revelation. To understand the twelve hundred and sixty days, in the text, of years, is agreeable to the stile of scripture elsewhere. Numb. xiv. 34. *After the number of the days in which ye searched the Land, even forty days, each day for a year shall ye bear your iniquities.* Ezek. iv. 8. *And, when thou hast accomplished them, ly again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days; I have appointed thee each day for a year.* Once more, the famous prophecy Dan. ix. 24. relating to the time of the coming of the Messiah, the seventy weeks mean not weeks of natural but prophetic days, *i. e.* years. Seventy times seven amount to four hundred and ninety, *i. e.* the return of the Jews out of Babylon and the coming of  
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of Christ. Thus the period, during which the Gentiles were to occupy the outer court, and tread under foot the holy city,---the woman was to sojourn in the wilderness,---the power of the beast was to continue,---and the witnesses were to prophesy in sackcloth,---is marked out with sufficient precision. The twelve hundred and sixty days, evidently are to be interpreted of twelve hundred and sixty years. The great question is, when these twelve hundred and sixty days or years commenced. If we knew when they commenced, we could easily ascertain the period at which they are to expire. Now, as to the commencement and expiration of these days or years, there are different opinions.--- There are especially two opinions, one or other of which may, perhaps, be the true one. The

First opinion is, that these twelve hundred and sixty days commenced about the year 300, and, consequently, expired about the year 1560. According to this opinion the forty-two months of treading under foot the holy city, --the time, times and half a time of the woman's abode in the wilderness,---the forty-two months of the power of the beast,---and the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth,---are expired. The killing of the witnesses is understood to relate to the cruel persecutions raised against the poor Christians, especially about the middle of the sixteenth century, or immediately before the year 1560. with which the twelve hundred and sixty days are supposed to expire. Wars, massacres and persecutions were raised against them in different places. Every indignity and insult was offered to them. It was not unusual, in those times, to keep their dead bodies, particularly those of their ministers, unburied for a considerable time ; that they might be exposed to every mark of infamy and disgrace. According to this opinion the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses, mentioned in the sequel of this chapter, with which the twelve hundred and sixty days are supposed to end, is understood to have happened about the foresaid year 1560,

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when

the profession of the reformed religion was allowed by public authority ; particularly, in Germany, England and Scotland. But

A second opinion has been adopted, and defended by the best Expositors, namely, that the twelve hundred and sixty days or years of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, did not commence so early as the year 300, and, consequently, must expire at a period posterior to the year 1560. According to this opinion, they rather are to be understood to commence about the year 756, and, consequently, will totally expire, about the year 2016. It is still understood here, that the twelve hundred and sixty years of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, denote the same period pointed out by the forty-two months of the power of the beast,—even the beast described, in chap. xiii. and xvii. of this Book. Now, if it be enquired, when the forty-two months of the power of the beast commenced, or the beast appeared, it is to be observed, that though the mystery of iniquity began to work as early as the apostolic age, and the man of sin was formed and grew gradually, as other men do, he did not assume the appearance, or answer to the character of the beast, as it is delineated in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of this book, till about the year 756, when the Pope became a temporal prince, or was invested with the temporal dominion of Rome ; and thus was made the eight king or head in Rome, the seat of his dominion. Under the emblem of a beast, in the prophecy of Daniel, to which, in different parts of this book, there is a manifest allusion,—a particular form of government is represented. Of the Antichristian beast we have a particular account in the chapters already referred to. He is said to *have seven heads*, to intimate, that Rome, the city standing upon seven hills, was to be the seat of his dominion ;—and *ten horns*, to signify the breaking or dividing of the Roman empire into ten kingdoms, prior to his appearance. He is said to be the *eighth, and one of the seven kings*, heads or forms



forms of government in Rome. *Five were passed away* prior to the writing of this book. *The sixth was* then present, viz. the imperial government considered as Pagan. If the imperial government considered as Christian, under Constantine and his successors, or that which obtained posterior to the imperial government and prior to the appearance of the beast, is reckoned; he is the eighth: if it is not, he is the seventh. This is the beast described in the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters of this book,—whose power was to continue forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days. The Roman beast evidently is intended. To that beast, only do the several parts of this description or character agree. It not only points out the Roman Antichrist;—but the Roman Antichrist considered as a temporal prince, or as invested with the temporal dominion of Rome. But it was not till about the year 756, that he thus became a temporal prince, or was invested with the temporal dominion of Rome. Now, if the Roman Antichrist is the beast described in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of this book,—if this beast did not appear till about the year 756,—if the beast, or the power of the beast was to continue forty-two months,—and if these forty-two months of the power of the beast denote the same period with the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth;—then it follows of course, that these twelve hundred and sixty days are to be understood to have commenced about the year 756, and and consequently totally to expire about the year 2016. Then is the Antichristian beast, or eight head in Rome, to go finally into perdition, as the former idolatrous heads did. This is the second opinion in relation to the commencement and expiration of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth.

If we might at all judge or determine in so difficult a case, we would incline to the second opinion. We apprehend that the forty-two months, during which

the Gentiles occupy the outer court, and tread under foot the holy city,—the time, times and half a time of the woman's abode in the wilderness,—the forty-two months of the power of the beast,—and, which is understood to be the same thing, the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth ;—are not yet totally expired. Therefore we have reason to fear that the killing of the witnesses is not yet wholly past : And we have reason to hope that any partial resurrection or ascension of the witnesses, that has already happened, is only a pledge or earnest of a more full and glorious resurrection and ascension of them to come. They will, in due time, arise out of obscurity, and make such a conspicuous figure as they never yet have done. As the rise of this Antichristian power was gradual, his downfall appears to be no less gradual, and slow. He is in part consumed already ; particularly since the commencement of the Protestant Reformation. But his total and final destruction is yet to come. The good work is begun and it will be accomplished at last. As the Lord has already *consumed him* in part by the Spirit of his mouth, he will, in due time, totally *destroy him by the brightness of his coming*, 2 Thess. ii. 3.

From the foregoing account of the time of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, two things are evident ; namely, that it is long and certain. The season is long, ----it is no less than twelve hundred and sixty years. Ages have elapsed, many ages have elapsed, since it first commenced, and it is not yet at an end. Is not *the holy city* still, in a great measure, *trodden under foot* ? Is not *the woman* in a great measure, still in the wilderness, or in a state of obscurity and distress ? And does not *the power of the beast*, in a great measure, still continue ? Again, it is a certain season. It consists of a certain number of years, months and days. At a certain period it commenced, and, at a certain period, it will expire. However uncertain or unknown  
either

either the commencement or the expiration of it be to us, both are known to God. It is even determined to a day. During twelve hundred and sixty days the woman was to sojourn in the wilderness, and the witnesses to prophesy in sackcloth. These days are totally to expire,---and the power of the beast is to be wholly at an end. The Lord hath said it, and he will do it; he hath spoken it, and he will make it good. § I shall now leave this, and proceed to the

IV. Thing in the general discussion of the words, ----The manner of the witnesses prophesying,---pointed out by their habit, *clothed in sackcloth*. The habit befits the prophetic character of the witnesses. It would appear, that the prophets in antient times, used to wear sackcloth, or a kind of hair-cloth. Isaiah xx. 2. Zech. xiii. 4. But it especially bespeaks the condition of the witnesses, during the twelve hundred and sixty days here mentioned. It was usual for the people of God under the Old Testament, to wear sackcloth in times of adversity or distress, either personal or public. Job, who evidently lived in an early age of the world, tells us, that, as a token of the great adversity that had befallen him, *he sewed sackcloth upon his skin, and defiled his horn in the dust*, chap. xvi. 15. When good Mordecai was apprized of the danger, with which the poor Jews were threatened, he put on *sackcloth and ashes*, and, in every province, *whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes*, Esther iv. 1, 2, 3. On the contrary, in times of prosperity and joy, those who were clad in sackcloth, cast it from

§ For a farther illustration of the second opinion, relating to the time of the expiration of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, the reader is desired to peruse, with attention, Newton on the prophecies, Lowman's valuable commentary on the Revelation, Guyse's Paraphrase, and notes on it, &c.

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them. Psal. xxx. 11. *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing : thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.* Accordingly the habit of the witnesses denotes two things.

1. It bespeaks a state of affliction, and great affliction. It is not for nought that the witnesses put on, and prophesy in sackcloth. Their habit corresponds to their circumstances. The Church is understood to be in a very low condition. The holy City is trodden under foot. It is the holy City,--a City holy as no other City in the world is. It is the City of God. He is the builder of it, and he resides in it. And yet it is trodden under foot. The woman is obliged to flee into the wilderness and sojourn there. A wilderness is a solitary, inhospitable and comfortless place. There may be an allusion to the situation of the literal Israel, in the wilderness of Arabia, or that of the prophet Elijah, when he was obliged to flee into the wilderness, to escape the persecution of Ahab. Here his condition was so very uncomfortable, that, weary of his life, and impatient under his trials, as well as grieved in his heart on account of the low state of the Church, and religion in her, *he requested for himself that he might die,* 1 Kings xix. 1, 2, 3, 4. How low has the Church been since the commencement of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth? How very low has the interest of God often been in the world, during that long and mournful period? -- Has it not been at different times, apparently in danger of sinking altogether? How few and feeble have the witnesses often been? What disadvantages and hardships have they laboured under? What have they suffered? Rather, What have they not suffered? How awfully and universally has the power of the Antichristian beast prevailed? How much does it still prevail? How much has Reformation been at a stand, in the Churches, for a long series of years past? How very low is religion in our times? How alarming is the present aspect of providence? When did matters, either  
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in Church or State, wear a more unfavourable, or a more threatening appearance ? How loud is the call, at present, to prepare for a day of trial ? The Antichristian *beast, that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit*, still is ready to make war with the witnesses ; and he may yet, in a great measure, overcome, and even kill them. What has befallen others, may befall us. What they have suffered, we may be called to suffer. *They have had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword ; they wandered about in sheep skins, and goat-skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; of whom the world was not worthy : they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,* Heb. xi. 36, 37, 38.

2. It intimates how much the witnesses are affected with the low circumstances of the Church, during the time of their prophesying. Shall the holy City be trodden under foot, and trodden under foot so long,—even for no less than forty-two prophetic months ?—Shall the woman be obliged to flee into the wilderness, and sojourn there, and sojourn there so long,—even for a time, times and half a time ?—Shall the power of the Antichristian beast prevail, almost universally prevail, and prevail so long,—even for twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days ?—And shall not the witnesses be deeply affected ? Often has the Church, both under the Old and New Testament, been reduced to a low condition, and as often have persons been raised to bewail her calamity and misery. The witnesses have all along been persons of a public spirit. The true minister of Christ, every true Christian is one, on whom comes daily the care of all the Churches, 2 Cor. xi. 28. What a narrow, contracted, selfish spirit actuates the greater part of professors ? The witnesses for God have all along been persons of another spirit. The case of the Church lies very near their hearts. The concern, they have shown for the advancement of the work of  
God

God in the Church, and their sympathy for her in her low condition, have rendered them famous to the end of the world. I might here remind you of some famous examples on record in scripture, such as Nehemiah, chap. ii. 3. *Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire.* The Psalmist, Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth : if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.* The prophet Jeremiah, chap. ix. 1. *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.* You know the commission given to the man with the writer's ink-horn by his side. It was to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations done in the midst of Jerusalem, Ezek. ix. 4. Such illustrious examples are not recorded for nought ; but for our imitation. As our circumstances are similar to theirs, what was their duty is now our duty. The call of the word and of providence now is, as it is express'd in Joel ii. 16, 17. *Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders : gather the children and those that suck the breasts ; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them : wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God ?*

Having endeavoured to explain the subject, I am now to proceed to the improvement.

1. We may infer the warrant, the necessity and the use of an explicit public testimony for truth ; and of that testimony in which we are engaged. The truth  
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has all along been maintained and preserved in purity, in the church, by an explicit, public testimony given to it. It is, indeed, indispensably necessary that we believe with the heart. The heart is the principal part of the man, and, therefore, what God principally requires and regards. But a believing with the heart does not at all supersede the necessity of confessing with the mouth. The one is necessary, in its own place, as well as the other, Rom. x. 10. Accordingly God has had his witnesses or Confessors in every age. He had them under the Old Testament, Isa. xlv. 10, 12. And hitherto, he has had them under the new Testament. Hitherto the banner has been displayed,—the testimony has been supported. It has been supported at great expence,—even at the expence of blood,—the blood of saints and prophets who have been slain upon the earth. They have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death, Rev. xii. 11. Various methods both of force and fraud, have been used to mar the progress and success of the testimony of the witnesses for truth. This has been the case in earlier and later times. It is but too well known what groundless and malicious objections have been raised against our testimony\*.

Notwithstanding that our testimony is, in substance, the same with the testimony of the witnesses in former ages of the church, it has been objected to as an innovation or novelty. This argues great inattention and ignorance. We have adopted the same interest, and embarked in the same cause, for which the witnesses have all along contended. What is there new in our cause and testimony? What new principle do we profess, or new religious practice do we plead for? What

\* The Author's intention here is not to restrict or confine the honourable character of Witnesses to that respectable, religious body with which he is connected, but to shew that their Testimony is, in substance, the same with all the faithful Witnesses both in earlier and later times.

principle do we profess, or practice do we plead for, that did not obtain in the reforming Church of Scotland, in her purest times? The nature and design of our Testimony has been much misunderstood and misrepresented. The general design of it is to avow and maintain the Doctrine, the Worship, the Government and Discipline of the Church of Scotland, as received, professed and practised in her, in reforming times; particularly between 1638 and 1649; and to testify against the backsliding or corrupt course, in which she has been for a long series of years, and still is, engaged. The Church of Scotland, in the present case, comes under a twofold consideration. She may be considered as a reforming Church. Such she was during the period just now mentioned. And from her as such, or under this consideration, we do not withdraw. On the contrary, we approve of and adhere to her. She rather has departed from herself. She is not what she once was. Accordingly she may be considered as a backsliding or corrupt Church. Such she evidently is at present. And from her under this consideration, we have withdrawn; after having, in vain, used all means and methods competent for us, in order to recover and reclaim her. But the cry of novelty, or a new thing, needs not alarm us. It is itself no novelty, or new thing. The Christian religion itself was objected to as a novelty or new thing, when it was first introduced among the nations of the world, Acts xvii. 18, 19, 20. And the same objection was started against the first reformers, at the commencement of the Protestant reformation, by the keenest advocates for the superstitions and corruptions of the Papal Church.

Again, it has often been said, that the present Corruptions of the Church of Scotland are so far from warranting us to withdraw or separate from her, that they rather strongly plead for our continuing in connexion and communion with her, in order that we may endeavour to reform and reclaim her from her backsliding course. As to this, it is readily admitted, that it never could

could have been warrantable for us to withdraw or secede from the Church of Scotland, without first using means, and all means in our power, for her conviction and recovery. Separation from her, no doubt, ought to have been our last shift. But this really was the case. Did not remonstrances and complaints, representations and petitions for the redress of grievances, come from all quarters to her supreme judicature? Did not many of her ministers, and other members, use constitutional methods for obtaining redress of their grievances? What was the result of these applications to her judicatures,—particularly, the Court of last resort in her? He must be a great stranger in our Israel who does not know. Besides, it is well known that the compilers and original espousers of our testimony, were cast out of the established Church. Matters came to such a Crisis with them, that it behoved them either to continue in her, on terms evidently sinful, or withdraw from her. They had no other alternative or choice left them. This is so well known to all who are in the least acquainted with the first rise of the Secession, that it is altogether unnecessary to enlarge on it at present.

Further, the unhappy rupture or breach, that so early happened in the seceding body, has been much improved against the Testimony and cause in which we are embarked. The general purport or amount of the objection is this,—The Seceders have divided among themselves, and, therefore the cause and Testimony in which they are engaged, is not, it cannot be the cause of God, nor the Testimony of Jesus. Inconclusive, absurd reasoning! Might not the same argument be used, and used with equal propriety and success, to prove, that the Protestant Reformation is not the Cause of God? Were not Luther and Calvin reformers, and eminent reformers too? And who knows not that they differed and divided? I may ascend still higher, and affirm, that the very same argument will prove that the Christian religion itself is not the cause of God. Two of the most eminent instruments that were employ-



ed to propagate the Christian faith in the world, differed and divided between themselves ; and the contest was so *sharp between them, that they departed asunder the one from the other.* You will easily perceive that I here refer to the case of Paul and Barnabas, Acts xv. 39. Because the professors of the Christian religion have, both in former and later times, differed, is it fair thence to infer, or conclude that the Christian religion is not the cause of God ? Certainly not. The mournful breach in the Associate Synod deserves, indeed, to be lamented and bewailed to the latest ages. We have reason to consider that dismal event, as a providential intimation of what was to befall the generation. Matters were so ordered by a God of judgment, that a stumbling-block was laid in the way of the generation, and they judicially left to harden and confirm themselves in their prejudices against that good cause in which we have embarked. Thus that mournful dispensation bespeaks not so much, perhaps, dissatisfaction with the parties between whom the rupture happened, as displeasure with the generation among whom they live,---and who so violently oppose their Testimony. Whatever sinful hand, either the one party or the other, or both, had in the breach, God had an all wise, unerring, and over-ruling hand in it.

Moreover, the procedure of this Synod against their Burgher brethren has been much improved against the Cause and Testimony in which they are engaged.--- This topic might require a larger discussion, than the present occasion admits of. I shall only say at present, that admitting this Synod erred in the matter of censuring the Burgher brethren, why should this be urged or improved to the disadvantage of our Testimony ? And why should it be allowed, by any, to be an insuperable obstacle in the way of their joining with us ; and prosecuting the ends of our Testimony ? What is the meaning or the amount of this objection ? It is evidently this.---We are satisfied in our minds that the Seceders are engaged in the cause of God and truth,---

we approve of their Testimony,—and we would wish to take part with them in prosecuting it ; but we cannot, we dare not ; for we apprehend their supreme Judicature, or the court of last resort among them erred, egregiously erred in censuring their Burgher brethren ; particularly in excommunicating them with the Higher Excommunicarion. What is the nature, tendency or consequence of this reasoning ? It plainly is this,—We will not join in any Church, or in any communion, however pure otherwise, except we be certain that the Judicatures, particularly the supreme Judicature in that Church neither has erred, nor can err. Now, I know of only one church on the face of the earth that pretends to infallibility. I need not tell you that this is the Church of Rome. It is a principle received in all Protestant churches, and particularly among us, that all Synods and Assemblies may err, and, in particular instances, do err. An approbation of the censures inflicted on the Burgher brethren never has been made a term of Communion, either Ministerial or Christian communion among us. All that is required of us, in relation to this controversy, in order to Ministerial communion with this Synod, is, that we be satisfied in our consciences concerning the decision of Synod in April 1746, finding the religious clause of the Burghers Oath inconsistent with the Testimony. Now, who that is unprepossessed, and reflects coolly, can hesitate concerning the inconsistency between that Clause and the Testimony we have adopted ? Is not every oath to be understood in the same sense by the Administrator and the Swearer of it ? Is not the administrator of the Burghers Oath understood to be a member of the Established Church of Scotland ? When he administers that oath, does he not mean an approbation of the religion established by law in that Church, and of the legal establishment of it in her ? Is not that the settlement or establishment it received at the late memorable Revolution ? Does not our Testimony find fault with several things in that establishment and settlement ?

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And is it not a glaring inconsistency for the same persons to adopt a Testimony condemning some things in the Revolution-settlement of religion, and, at the same time, swear an oath containing an unlimited approbation of that settlement of religion? In fine, the use that is made of the Testimony among us, has been objected to. We make an approbation of, and accession to it, a term of Christian as well as Ministerial communion among us. All that is necessary, to justify this measure, is, to recollect the general design or purport of the Testimony. It is a Testimony for the sacred truths and precious institutions of Christ: as also against error in principle and immorality in practice. Now why should any hesitate concerning the propriety of denying admission to the sealing ordinances of the Church to persons who either refuse to avow the truth, or disavow error? Can the stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven be answerable to him that appointed them, to their own consciences, to the Church, or to the generation, if they admit to a participation of sealing ordinances, any who persist in error or immorality? Surely not.—As to the reason for making one's entering into the Bond for the Renovation of our Covenants, the term both of Ministerial and Christian communion among us, it may be collected from what has been advanced above. In admitting to the sealing ordinances of the church, we are to require a firm attachment to all the truths, and a conscientious observation of all the ordinances of Christ; and in a particular manner, that truth or ordinance that is most opposed or omitted among us. Now who knows not the strong opposition that has been made to this sacred institution? In proportion therefore, to its importance, and the opposition it receives among us, we ought to appear strenuously for it, and exert ourselves, in our several stations to promote it.

2. From what hath been said, we may see, that we need not think it strange, or take it ill, though our Testimony be in great disrepute, and very few to adopt or betriend



befriend it. This is no new thing. Often has the Testimony for truth been in disrepute, and great disrepute in the world, and few, very few to favour it. We need not be discouraged tho' we be both few and feeble. Notwithstanding that the enemies of the cause, in which we are embarked, are both numerous and powerful, we may say as the prophet to his servant,—*They that be with us are more than they that be with our adversaries. If God be for us, who can be against us?* The work is in a good hand,—a hand in which it cannot be mismanaged or lost. *The wonderful Man, whose name is the BRANCH, and who has already grown up out of his place; shall build temple of the Lord, and bear the glory,* Zech. vi. 12, 13.

3. Encouragement to all who are called to appear for Christ and his cause in the world. Their lot may be ordered in an evil time. But they serve a good master. None are losers at hand. None will be losers in the end. They may sustain loss for him. But he will make up their loss. He will incomparably more than compensate for all the loss they suffer for his sake in the world. A rich, an infinitely rich reward awaits them in the other world. The believing Hebrews *took joyfully the spoiling of their earthly goods, knowing in themselves they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance,—an inheritance far more excellent, and far more durable than any in this world.* Heb. x. 34. The witnesses may be encouraged in relation to themselves, and also in relation to their work.—In relation to themselves. Are they weak, the grace of Christ, the Head of the New Covenant, is all sufficient. The weaker they are, the efficacy of his grace will be the more conspicuous in supporting and assisting them. Are they called not only to do but to suffer for Christ? It never has been his method to send any either to work or warfare, on their own charges or expences.—In relation to their work, or the Testimony in which they are engaged. As it is the Testimony of Jesus,—the interest and cause of truth, it must be preserved and prevail.

prevail. The adversary may say, it will sink;---the world may say it;---an unbelieving and distrustful heart may say it;---but God has said the contrary. And *let God be true* in all that he says, particularly in relation to the maintenance and advancement of his work,---and every creature that contradicts him, a liar. The Father's promise to his Son, our glorious Mediator is, Psalm xlv. 17. *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations : therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.*

4. It will be of special use and advantage to us to consider, in what a period of the Church our lot has fallen,---what is incumbent on us,---and what we may lay our account with, in such times and circumstances. Still, in a great measure, the outer court is occupied by the Gentiles,—the holy city, in a great measure, is trodden under foot,—the power of the Antichristian beast, in a great measure, prevails,—the woman is not yet totally delivered, or brought up out of the wilderness. We have, indeed, reason to be glad as well as sad. Our situation is not unlike to that of the Jews, when the foundations of the second Temple were laid.—There was, in their exercise, on that occasion, a wonderful mixture of joy and sorrow. It was no small cause of joy, that the foundation of the temple was again laid ; and that the sacred edifice was to be rebuilt. But it was ground of great sorrow that the second house was to be so far inferior to the first one. Or, as the sacred writer expresses it,—*All the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the Priests and Levites, and chief of the Fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy ; So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy, from the noise of the weeping of the people : for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.*

Ezra

Ezra iii. 11, 12, 13. Let us acknowledge, with gratitude, the relief that has been granted to the Protestant Churches, considering what an insupportable load of Popish usurpations and corruptions they laboured under in the days of our fathers. But how sad is it to think of the Continuation of the power of the Beast, I may say, in its full force, in many countries called Christian. Alas ! the dregs of Antichristian abominations is in most of the Protestant Churches, if not all of them. How low is religion at present in all the Churches ? How much is the testimony, the cause, the work of God out of vogue ? The greater part, instead of contributing, in their stations, towards the revival and advancement of it, are doing what in them lies to suppress and bear it down. Let us think what is incumbent on us in such times and circumstances of the Church. Let us be reconciled to all the reproach and all the opposition we do, or can meet with in the way of duty. Let us go on till we finish our testimony. In this way we shall surmount all difficulties, and weather all storms, and at last *overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our Testimony.*

5. We may see infallible security for the final ruin of the Antichristian interest,—the further resurrection and ascension of the witnesses,—the revival of the work of God,—and the coming of a glorious and flourishing period of the Church on earth such as never yet has obtained. The rise of the great Antichrist was determined, as the event has proved ; and his downfall is no less determined. The one was foretold, the other is no less predicted and insured. God has said it, and he will do it. As it behoved him to arise, it is no less necessary that he be brought down. Babylon, the Antichristian Babylon is fallen in part already, and her total and final downfall will be effectuated in the appointed time. The beast has already received his deadly wound, of which we hope he never will be totally healed. He may linger out his miserable life long, and, like an expiring animal, make many vigorous efforts and struggles,



gles, but he must expire at last. All endeavours to heal, totally heal the wound he has received, and restore him to his wonted power and dominion must be vain. Every attempt that is made this way from time to time, will, we hope, tend rather to hasten his final overthrow and destruction. There are many prophecies and promises in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, relating to the further downfall of the Antichristian kingdom, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ on its ruins, which have not yet received their accomplishment, but will be accomplished in the last times. Long was the true religion confined to the Eastern world. Ages ago it penetrated into the Western parts of our side of the globe. Of later years it reached the great Western world; and we hope, it will take an extensive run throughout that world in the latter days. What great and glorious events are yet to be accomplished prior to the second coming of Christ? What a glorious accession will the Church receive, when the Jewish nation is converted to the Christian faith? Under the Old Testament the church consisted of Jews, Under the New Testament hitherto she has consisted mostly of Gentiles. But in the concluding age of the world, there is to be a general conversion of Jews and Gentiles together. Many are to come from the east and the west,—from the north and the south. What great and interesting events are yet to be accomplished? May we live, and at last die in the belief and expectation of their accomplishment in due time.—I must draw to a close.

We see, my dear Fathers and Brethren, in what times and circumstances the all-wise God has ordered our lot. Let us, with gratitude, acknowledge the partial deliverance that has already been granted to the church, in the begun accomplishment of the prophecies relating to the destruction of the Antichristian interest. Let us wait, with unwearied patience and eager desire, for a more glorious fulfilment of them. We have indeed, reason to bewail the degeneracy of the times. Religion

ligion is in great disrepute. The friends of truth are both few and feeble. We labour under many disadvantages and discouragements: But we are engaged in a good cause, and serve a good Master. It is a cause he has signally owned in the happy experience of others in former times. He has not altogether forgotten; neither will he ever altogether disown it. Much is incumbent on us in our station and place; especially in such degenerate times. Let us endeavour to be explicit and faithful in our appearances for truth. May we ever reckon it our honour to serve Christ and promote his interest on earth. Let us study to be reconciled to our lot and condition. Let us encourage ourselves and animate one another, in the pleasing prospect of the total and final deliverance of the Church. The season of her distress will shortly be at an end. *She will, in due time, come up out of the wilderness; and the witnesses will put off their sackcloth.* Till this be the case, let us apply and plead the all gracious declaration in the text, — *I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy, a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth* — I have only to add a word to the Congregation, and then I have done.

YOU see, My dear Friends, what is both your duty and interest. It is competent for, and incumbent on you, as well as us, to be witnesses for God in the world. He has always had, and ever will have his witnesses on earth. He had them before you were born, and he will have them after you are buried. He never has been nor ever will be at a loss for instruments to carry on his work, and promote his interest in the world. Now you have an opportunity of adopting his interest. He is a great and good Master. His service is both profitable and pleasant. You have no reason to be ashamed either of him or his service; — of any of his truths or institutions. Study to know the value and worth of truth; and to be inviolably attached to it. You know not  
what

what an adherence to the cause of Christ may cost you. You may come to be in such a critical situation, as to be under an indispensable necessity, either to deny Christ, or be deprived of all that is near and dear to you in the world. The way to the crown has all along been by the cross. When had matters, either in Church or State, a more threatening appearance than at present ? But all will be well with God's two witnesses. They are very near and dear to him. Support under all trials, and sufficient assistance in all duties, are infallibly insured to them. He, whose they are, and whom they serve, has a particular concern for their safety, welfare and comfort ; and he will make a good account of them in the end. The encouraging and animating declaration in the text has been verified in the sweet experience of many who have gone before us ; and it is applied to, and pleadable by us as well as them,—*I will give power to my witnesses, and they shall prophesy, a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

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